

Hani ZUROB: On the Path to the Abstract

Standing out from his generation of emerging Palestinian artists, Hani Zurob is creating pioneering work, freeing himself from the burdens of academic experience and the remnants of the symbolist era in the Palestinian art movement. Hani has entered an expressionist phase in his work that far transcends the experiences of his generation. This phase has served as a transition period, allowing Hani to move beyond collective rhetoric and enter a private, particular space. One of the most striking characteristics of this period is that the artist has become the center of his work, merging the modes of researcher and research subject. Thus many of his new works bear personal features that captivate and touch us.

This period has enabled Hani to work through a myriad of experiences in search of his own style. Hani's paintings about the siege are the culmination of this transition period. The reds, yellows and blues are pure and vibrant and the lines are strong, so that the painting appears imbued with a dramatic energy. The presence of the contorted figure in the painting points to a psychological echo of the physical representations of the siege. The figure has clearly been permanently transformed, because of the severe and inhumane conditions it has had to endure.

As one observes Hani's continuous artistic transformation (reflecting a deepening artistic maturity) through his paintings, the contorted figure is assimilated, liberating the painting from its centralization and becoming characterized by a new sensation. The colors start to fade, becoming deeper, and the lines grow more complex in rhythm. Their strength is no longer instilled by the presence and strength of the pigments, but rather by their absence, allowing subtlety and mystery. Thus the painting is more open to contemplation and becomes more abstract in formation and color, allowing a greater freedom for the suffocated "self" of the artist, not only to grow, but to assimilate with the act of painting itself. The "self" becomes the painting after being imprisoned by it.

By resorting to the abstract, the artist has more freedom to deal with color and form in a manner that emancipates the painting from its parameters and opens it to the absolute. Thus the painting becomes a space liberated for new possibilities of form and interpretation.

Mahmoud Abu Hashhash
Ramallah 2006